

On December 13, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID, the overseas development arm of the U.S. Government) awarded eight Mozambicans full scholarships to study for advanced degrees in economics in South Africa. USAID is funding three, two-year Masters degrees and six, one-year honors.

USAID Mission Director Jay Knott explained to the grantees that the program's objective is to "improve the climate for economic growth because Mozambique must continue to grow in order to overcome the difficulties of poverty." He added that "much is expected of the few" who have been selected for these scholarships.

The scholarship winners are Neli Sumbana, Fernando Jorge Castanheiro Bilale, Shaida Seni, Aderito Notico, Vania Maguau Pereira, Samuel Ermelinda Zita, Joel Muzima, Nelson Maximiano, and Nasser Mussa Bahadur. They come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including recent university graduates, government officials, and television. Some will resume their careers in government ministries and academia, while others intend to enter the private sector.

The grantees were subjected to an intense selection process. In addition to excellent academic credentials, they needed to demonstrate fluency in written and spoken English. A panel interviewed 25 short-listed candidates and awarded eight scholarships. The scholarship recipients have just returned from a 40-day intensive English training program at the University of Stellenbosch designed to prepare them for their studies.

USAID chose four South African universities on the basis of quality of academic programs and the suitability of these programs to Mozambique's needs and USAID's strategic objectives: expansion of export markets, improvement of the enabling environment, and strengthening of labor-intensive industries. The participating universities are the University of Cape Town, University of Stellenbosch, University of the Western Cape, and the University of Pretoria.